

October 1, 2008

TO: Anne Bates

FROM: Teresa Parsons  
Director's Review Program Supervisor

SUBJECT: Karla Anne Bates v. Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)  
Allocation Review Request ALLO-07-090

On September 16, 2008, I conducted a Director's review telephone conference, concerning the allocation of your PBX Chief Operator position at Western State Hospital. Both you and Bob Swanson from DSHS's Classification and Compensation Unit participated in the conference.

### **Director's Determination**

This position review was based on the work performed for the six-month period prior to September 10, 2007. As the Director's designee, I carefully considered all of the documentation in the file, the exhibits presented during the Director's review conference, and the verbal comments provided by both parties. Based on my review and analysis of your assigned duties and responsibilities, I conclude your position is properly allocated to the PBX Chief Operator classification.

### **Background**

On September 10, 2007, DSHS's Classification and Compensation Unit received the Position Description Form (PDF) for your position (#ED50) in which you requested reallocation to the Communications Officer 4 classification. Subsequent to your request, Mr. Swanson performed a job audit. By letter dated September 17, 2007, Classification and Compensation Manager Pamela Pelton informed you that your position was properly allocated to the PBX Chief Operator classification. Specifically, Ms. Pelton determined your position fit within the PBX and Telephone Operator class series because the classes had specifically been established for positions working in communication centers within an institution, teaching hospital, or medical center. While Ms. Pelton indicated you did

not meet the desirable qualifications, skills and abilities of the Communications Officer 4 class, Mr. Swanson clarified that your position did not meet the definition of the Communications Officer 4 class.

On October 16, 2007, the Department of Personnel received your request for a Director's review of DSHS's allocation determination.

The following summarizes your perspective as well as your employer's:

**Summary of Ms. Bates's Perspective**

You assert you have the skills and abilities and that your position meets the definition of the Communications Officer 4 classification. You contend you perform work consistent with the majority of typical work examples identified by the Communications Officer 4 class. You further assert you supervise positions that perform duties consistent with the typical work of Communications Officer 1 positions. You emphasize that the communications center at Western State Hospital is the point of contact for all emergencies. As such, you state that your position, as well as those you supervise, maintains responsibility for notifying the 911 call center (Fire Com) and relaying accurate information so Fire Com can determine the level of care and the urgency of the response. As a result, you state that you developed an emergency checklist (Exhibit G) to obtain crucial medical information and established emergency protocol. You assert that while the staff person remains on the line (on hold) you elicit the information necessary to report to 911 staff.

In addition to receiving emergency calls, you assert you supervise staff who monitor the Security Escort Personnel Alarm System, activated by staff wearing an alarm pendant for use when imminent danger is present. You assert you communicate with security personnel on hospital grounds and inform security where and when to meet emergency responders to escort them to the location of an incident. You further assert that at times, you communicate directly with Steilacoom emergency personnel but acknowledge such communication is infrequent. You contend that you monitor all radio communications on hospital grounds and state the communications center serves as a check and balance point for "unauthorized leave" (when a patient leaves the grounds or is unaccounted for) and ensure law enforcement receives proper communication. In addition to performing and supervising duties related to emergency communications, you complete payroll, conduct employee evaluations, attend meetings with hospital personnel and local law enforcement, and oversee reports regarding "unauthorized leave" activity. In summary, you believe the Communications Officer 4 classification better describes the duties and level of responsibility assigned to your position.

### **Summary of DSHS's Reasoning**

DSHS acknowledges you play a vital role in relaying critical information to 911 call center staff and that you are a working supervisor. However, DSHS contends your responsibilities for receiving and transmitting information concerning security, safety, medical, or behavioral situations fall within the full scope of duties outlined in the PBX Chief Operator classification. Similarly, DSHS contends your duties and responsibilities of supervising emergency notifications and the use of multiple communications methods (telephone, two-way radio, and computer) are consistent with the PBX Chief Operator class. DSHS asserts your role in supervising emergency situations is to relay information and messages, facilitating the exchange between ward staff and the 911 operator. As such, DSHS contends your position has not been tasked with supervising the dispatching duties and responsibilities assigned to lower level Communication Officer positions that directly dispatch emergency and law enforcement personnel. DSHS emphasizes that the PBX and Telephone Operator class series is specifically indented for positions handling calls, including emergencies, within an institution, teaching hospital, or medical center. DSHS asserts prior Personnel Appeals Board (PAB) decisions support allocating positions to a particular class when the positions were specifically created to perform the duties addressed in that class. As evidence, DSHS cites *Sorensen v. DSHS, ALLO-04-0020* and *Gessini, et al. v. DSHS, ALLO-04-0012*. DSHS believes your position is properly allocated to the PBX Chief Operator class.

### **Rationale for Director's Determination**

The purpose of a position review is to determine which classification best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of a position. A position review is neither a measurement of the volume of work performed, nor an evaluation of the expertise with which that work is performed. A position review is a comparison of the duties and responsibilities of a particular position to the available classification specifications. This review results in a determination of the class that best describes the overall duties and responsibilities of the position. Liddle-Stamper v. Washington State University, PAB Case No. 3722-A2 (1994).

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

The PDF summarizes the scope of your position as follows (Exhibit B-3):

This position performs administrative, supervisory, and operational duties as the manager of a 24 hour a day, 7 days per week communications center that provides telephone and emergency response services to patients, staff and the community. This position ensures new officers are well trained and helps them to develop capacities for efficiency and sound judgment.

During the Director's review conference, both parties confirmed the communications center is located in the main lobby of Western State Hospital (WSH). You supervise two positions staffing the communications center, with one position handling incoming calls and visitors and the other handling emergencies. The positions rotate midway through the shift; however, either position may handle emergencies as the need arises. Your position may also be the one dealing with an emergency situation as needed.

Although the duties listed on the PDF do not identify the percentages of work performed, you affirmed that you supervise PBX and Telephone Operator positions performing emergency communications the majority (60%) of the time. Your duties and responsibilities are summarized as follows:

- Supervising and managing the operations of an emergency communications center.
- Developing work procedures and coordinating and directing staff performance to ensure uniformity and compliance with hospital policy and procedures.
- Responsibility for initial and continuous training of all communications center personnel, ensuring mandatory training is completed.
- Working with staff to help develop the capacity for efficiency and sound judgment.
- Maintaining performance records, evaluation, training, counseling, and disciplinary action of staff.
- Maintaining and preparing reports of communication center activities.
- Member of Emergency Services sub-committee and acting as a liaison between the committee and hospital management, emergency services, and local law enforcement.
- Updating office procedures, holding staff meetings, preparing weekly schedules for 24/7 shifts.
- Conducting investigations of complaints concerning the operation of the communications center.

During the Director's review conference, the parties clarified that supervision of *dispatching services* meant dispatching WSH personnel on hospital grounds in response to any number of issues. In addition, *dispatching* police, fire medical aid, means contacting 911. The positions you supervise are not responsible for dispatching local emergency responders outside of WSH grounds. Rather, the positions you supervise

provide pertinent information obtained from WSH personnel initiating the call, which is then relayed to the 911 operator. An example of this type of exchange recorded from the emergency line is included (Exhibit E). In addition, the Operator Information book references the procedures to be followed when emergencies occur (Exhibit F-5). For medical emergencies, Communications Center staff utilizes the Medical Emergency Call Checklist you developed to obtain vital information (Exhibit G). Staff members also use independent judgment to relay accurate information to the 911 operator.

#### Comparison of Duties to Communications Officer 4

The definition of the Communications Officer 4 classification reads as follows:

Performs administrative, supervisory, and operational duties as the manager of a communications center or as noncommissioned training officer for the State Patrol.

Although examples of typical work identified in a class specification do not form the basis for an allocation, they lend support to the work envisioned within a classification. While your position may perform duties similar to those identified in the Communications Officer 4 examples of work, these positions typically work for the Washington State Patrol or other enforcement agencies.

When determining whether the Communications Officer classes fit the duties and responsibilities assigned to your position, I considered the Communications Officer series as a whole and the distinctions between those classes and the PBX and Telephone Operator and PBX Chief Operator classes. While some of the duties assigned to the PBX Operator positions may be similar or overlap with the Communications Officer classes, the PBX Operator positions have not been tasked with directly dispatching or communicating information to Washington State Patrol mobile units or other enforcement agencies, as described in the Communications Officer 1 classification as follows: (Exhibit F-4).

. . . Positions allocated to this classification transmit, receive, and relay information concerning public safety activities to, from, and between *State Patrol mobile units and stations and other law enforcement*. . . .

Neither your position nor the positions you supervise have been assigned the responsibility of relaying information directly to and from State Patrol mobile units or stations and other law enforcement. Instead, your position provides and supervises others who provide information through a 911 operator during emergency situations. Therefore, the Communications Officer 4 class is not the appropriate classification for your position.

Comparison of Duties to PBX Chief Operator

The definition of the PBX Chief Operator classification reads:

Directs the operation of a large private branch telephone exchange;  
supervises several PBX operators.

The typical work statements of the PBX Chief Operator class most in line with your position's duties and responsibilities include the following:

- Develop working procedures; train, instruct, and evaluate employees; make shift assignment and keep time records;
- Supervise keeping of records;
- Direct the operation of central reception area;
- Operate Private Branch Exchange (PBX); receive and place long distance, collect, toll free, bill-to, credit, SCAN and other calls; transfer calls between extensions; maintain call logs and records;
- Program and operate paging system to locate individuals, pass information or announce incoming calls;
- Maintain locator files; provide directory services; assist callers in locating proper departments, offices or individuals by determining the nature of business involved;
- Receive and direct public; give information to visitors or callers pertaining to procedures and/or on-campus activities;

The duties and responsibilities assigned to your position meet the definition and distinguishing characteristics of the PBX Chief Operator class. While the PBX Chief Operator class does not specifically address emergency situations, the PBX and Telephone Operator class pertaining to the positions you supervise defines the class as follows (Exhibit F-3):

Serving an institution, teaching hospital, or medical center, receives and routes incoming calls through private branch telephone exchange (PBX) or other telephone switching system, and is responsible for receiving and transmitting to staff information concerning security, safety, medical or

behavioral situations requiring immediate investigative or corrective action.

The distinguishing characteristics of the PBX and Telephone Operator class further note that positions "exercise independent judgment when dealing with emergent situations," perform duties of campus radio dispatching, personal alarm system, emergency digital voice recording system, paging system, public address system, and intercom system. These positions are also responsible for implementing and escalating emergency notifications as the situation demands.

It is clear your position plays an important role in communicating emergency situations that arise at WSH. A position's allocation, however, is not based on an evaluation of performance or an individual's ability to perform higher-level work. Rather, it is based on the majority of work assigned to a position. Based on the duties and responsibilities assigned to your position, the PBX Chief Operator classification best describes your position, # ED50.

### **Appeal Rights**

RCW 41.06.170 governs the right to appeal. RCW 41.06.170(4) provides, in relevant part, the following:

An employee incumbent in a position at the time of its allocation or reallocation, or the agency utilizing the position, may appeal the allocation or reallocation to . . . the Washington personnel resources board . . . . Notice of such appeal must be filed in writing within thirty days of the action from which appeal is taken.

The address for the Personnel Resources Board is 2828 Capitol Blvd., P.O. Box 40911, Olympia, Washington, 98504-0911.

If no further action is taken, the Director's determination becomes final.

c: Bob Swanson, DSHS  
Lisa Skriletz, DOP

Enclosure: List of Exhibits